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ABSTRACT

Current working conditions of postsecondary faculty in the People's Republic of China are described, with a focus on what has changed since 1976 and the end of the Cultural Revolution. Based on field work in China and on personal correspondence with Chinese faculty members between 1984 and 1989, a broad overview is presented of college and university teaching staff. Specific topics such as workplace, workload, salary, benefits, and evaluation for promotion are discussed. Particular attention is paid to the changes occurring in Chinese society and its educational system that affect faculty members. Contains 39 footnotes. (KM)

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Postsecondary Faculty: Life and Work in the People's Republic of China

What are current conditions of life and work for college and university faculty in China? What has changed since 1976 and the end of the Cultural Revolution? This paper presents current working conditions of postsecondary faculty in the People's Republic of China. Based on field work in China and personal correspondence with Chinese faculty members between 1984 and 1989, a broad overview is presented of college and university teaching staff while discussing such specific topics as workplace, workload, salary and benefits, and evaluation for promotion. Particular attention is paid to the changes occuring in Chinese society and its educational system that affect faculty members.

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POSTSECONDARY FACULTY IN CHINA

Harold A. Smith

Today in China there are three independent school systems: full-time schools, spare-time schools, and work-study schools. Full-time schools at all levels constitute the bulk of the nation's educational institutions and play the main role in the country's education. They consist of full-time primary, full-time secondary, specialized secondary, and full-time tertiary institutions (Table 1). The last mentioned level, full-time colleges and universities, felt the strongest effects of the chaotic forces of Mao Zedeng's version of Pandora's box. The particular focus of this report will be on the life and work of faculty in postsecondary schools.

From 1966-76, China's education system was the target of one of the most radically reactionary programs in any nation. Today, almost no-one in China has anything good to say about that period. Most say it was the most destructive decade faced by the Chinese people since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, and has been blamed for destroying almost a generation of promising scholars.[1]

Since 1977, everyone in China seems to be concentrating on putting the 'chaotic decade' behind them and overcoming the amorphous forces that brought almost all constructive education to a halt. What has been accomplished in the ensuing decade of growth and what remains to be done is what we will examine after first getting a broad profile of current conditions.

Profile

There are twelve catagories of higher education institutions: comprehensive universities, colleges and universities of engineering, agriculture, forestry, medical science, teacher training, business

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administration and economics, political science and law, physical culture, arts, foreign languages, and minority nationalities. By 1981, there were 675 institutions of higher learning with plans for at least 15 more. There were a total of 246,900 full-time teachers, one for every 4.6 students. The distribution was 4,212 professors, 13,788 associate professors, 119,100 lecturers, and 109,800 assistant teachers.[2] Since then, numerous new colleges and universities have begun, often privately or locally administered. For the 1985-86 academic year, there were 1016 colleges and universities and 344,267 full-time teachers, one for each 4.9 students. The distribution was 4,679 professors, 28,606 associate professors, 136,760 lecturers, 39,111 instructors, and 135,111 assistant teachers.[3] During these years, colleges of science and engineering have expanded and multiplied to the neglect of liberal arts, law and business administration. From 1981-85, while liberal arts, law and business administration institutions increased from 112 to 169, those of science and engineering increased from 319 to 378.[4]

Administration

The president is appointed by the State Council as the chief administrator of a college or university. However, all important decisions must be approved by the school's Party Committee before being implemented by the president.

Inside a college or university, there are various administrative organs for personnel, teaching, research, productive labor and general affairs. The chairman and vice chairman of each academic department are appointed by the president, while the members, head and deputy head of each department's teaching and research committees can be either elected or appointed. These two committees are responsible for implementation of the teaching plan, selecting and compiling teaching materials, working out syllabi and supervising research work.

On the college and university level, there are various academic committees composed of full professors and other faculty members with sufficient experience. In addition to making recommendations regarding the institution's educational development, scientific research and training

of postgraduates, these committees' responsibilities include evaluating results of research, assessing theses or dissertations, determining the promotion of professors and associate professors, sponsoring academic forums, and selecting participants for academic exchanges at home and abroad.

Faculty

Postsecondary faculty members are drawn primarily from two sources: graduates of one's own university or college, and graduates from other institutions of higher learning. Men predominate overwhelmingly in science and technology fields while women, though making some gains in liberal arts, are still outnumbered.

Most faculty members hold undergraduate degrees or their equivalent: 273,747 of 482,974 in 1985.[5] But, the number of persons with graduate schooling is small due to the decimation of the faculty ranks during the "Cultural Revolution" (1966-76), as well as the anti-academic emphasis of education during that period.[6] Figures for 1985 indicate 22,301.[7] At present, many persons who do hold graduate degrees (primarily in technical fields) are more heavily involved in research and industry than in education. With the current development of Chinese postsecondary education as well as an emphasis on study abroad, the raw numbers are sure to rise - the United States alone hosted approximately 17,000 students from the People's Republic of China in the 1986-87 school year - though perhaps not radically changing the ratio between undergraduate and graduate degree holders.[8]

There have been few part-time faculty. However, that situation shows signs of rapidly changing with the introduction of a contract system that allows schools or departments to engage a teacher from another department in the same school or even from another institution. In addition, numerous private or locally administered colleges and universities are opening to meet the demand for more access to postsecondary education. In such schools, the majority of the faculty are contracted part-time from other schools or retired faculty.

The Workplace

China is not short of talent. With over 344,000 postsecondary faculty and at least 1,700,000 college level students, a different problem is apparant. One university had 3,000 teachers (among whom 60% were lecturers and professors) with 9,000 students, giving a ratio of one teacher to three students.[9] This situation illustrates a problem that exists in many postsecondary schools, overstaffing, and it causes embarrasment for higher education leaders in China.[10]

Yet, while it is true that there are not enough professionals in some areas, there are also quite a number of highly trained personnel who are not being fully utilized. Beijing University, China's premier university, is so over-staffed that it could take a lecturer fifty years to complete the work required to become an associate professor.[11] As a result, many associate professors have to work as laboratory assistants to leave their positions open for lecturers who want to become assistant professors. This situation has been encouraged by a patriarchal system of promotion resting on seniority instead of ability or merit.[12]

Before 1949, and even during the early years after the founding of the People's Republic, there was usually just one person to take care of everything, a 'secretary - educational administrator - typist - cataloguer - purchasing agent - bookkeeper.' Typically this was a university graduate whose efficiency enabled the dean to concentrate on teaching affairs. But, now things are different. One person doing everything has become several people doing the same thing. Low efficiency also means that research and teaching time must be shared with jobs that should be done by the administration.[13]

Factors contributing to this imbalance are numerous. Many administrators lack the training, initiative, and capacity to handle a multi-faceted job. Further, there are no guidelines as to the best ratio between students and teachers; so, some administrators do not even recognize the problem. Also, the system of having all students live on campus limits enrollment to available space in student housing.[14] Schools have responded to demands for increased enrollment by placing more students in each room. But, even with overcrowding, i.e., double/triple-decker bunks in 'twin' rooms, enrollment is limited. Overcrowding has also meant that faculty members often have no office space and, therefore, must do

their study and preparation in their apartments.

The imbalance between faculty and students becomes more serious all the time and does not seem close to a solution. Yet, there are encouraging signs. With the support of the government and the public, the city of Beijing has opened 96 institutions of higher education providing things like vocational, spare-time and correspondence courses. As of 1984, they were reportedly serving 58,606 students with 5,523 instructors and administrative staff.[15] That would give a ratio for those institutions of one teacher or administrator for sixteen students. In contrast, the average for East Asia and the Pacific, excluding China, was one to twelve.[16]

Zhejiang University, in Hangzhou, without increasing their existing faculty, contracted with the China Petro-Chemical Corporation to train 1,000 of its employees over the next twenty years. An added benefit to the university is the 8 million Yuan earned under that contract. Wuhan University has run courses in librarianship for the general Xinhua Bookstore, journalism for the Ministry of Radio and T.V., and international finance for the Bank of China.[17]

In recent years, Anhui Electrical Engineering Institute has put considerable effort into developing a campus factory. The institute appointed some of its best teachers to strengthen the factory management and technical staff, without removing them from their teaching jobs. In 1984, the factory made a profit of more than 300,000 Yuan which is being used to improve the school. In addition, the factory provides practical experience for the students and teachers.[18]

Other than imbalance, a separate but related problem for teachers and students is the present exam system. Many people are recognizing that the present exam system "merely tests memory."[19] In 1984, Zhejiang Province in Southeast China held its first essay competition for middle school students. The outcome was a bombshell. Most awards went to those entrants who were considered "average" or "hopeless" in class. The 'key' schools, whose students are enrolled through competitive examinations and who are allocated most of the funds and the best teachers, earned none of the first prizes and only a few of the second and third awards.

Termed the "retardation of good marks," this performance pointed out that Chinese education is

largely exam-centered, from primary school through university.[20] Since the performance of both the teacher and the student are judged by the results of examinations, a teacher's promotion and pay depends heavily on the grades of the class. Therefore, over- zealousness and "teaching to the exam" can easily, and understandably, result.

Here too, reform is helping. Admission policies for 1985-86 in some secondary and postsecondary schools did not require exam scores. Instead, they looked at previous school records and physical fitness as admissions criteria. Hopefully, other schools will follow suit as they recognize the benefit of such a policy in making postsecondary education more universally available.[21]

However, some troubling data indicate that even with the central government's emphasis on reform, and the seeming positive effect on the teacher-student ratio and the opening of new higher institutions, the overall numbers of secondary graduates and applicants for higher education have been declining, from 5,858,000 and 5,700,000 respectively in 1977 to 1,966,000 and 1,760,000 in 1985. In the same period, the number of students admitted to higher education have increased from 278,000 to 587,000.[22] This illustrates the troublesome nature of real educational reform in China.

Workload

Commonly a teacher has one or two courses, each of which meets four hours a week. Normal class size is thirty, though lecture classes may have 50-100 students. Undergraduate classes are often taught by lecturers with assistant teachers correcting homework and answering student's questions after class. Assistant teachers may also participate in preparing and presenting lectures and guiding experiments. Lecturers, associate professors and professors generally do some research work and write articles and books. Professors may be assisted by more than one assistant teacher or even by lecturers. First year teachers have no official rank and rarely have teaching duties.

In accordance with guidelines of the State Education Commission, the following indicates how a postsecondary teacher's workload is determined:[23]

1. Teachers are expected to work the equivalent of 8 hours a day, 5 days a week (classes meet 6 days), 42 weeks a year = 1,680 work hours a year.

2. Actual teaching-work hours are calculated as: number of class periods multiplied by 3 to 5 multiplied by the number of courses. The factor of 3 to 5 represents preparation hours, counseling students and correcting papers. The exact factor used is set by the school according to the perceived difficulty of teaching a particular course.

An English teacher, for example, usually has 4 hours a week with one class and will teach two classes of about 30 students each. The work hours will be computed in this way: 4 multiplied by 3 to 5 multiplied by 2 = 24 to 40 hours. If a previously untaught course is assigned, the coefficient may be (5 to 7), reflecting greater need for preparation, and one or two semesters of preparation time may be allotted to develop the course. In addition, if guiding graduate students in their research work and writing of papers, the teacher's semester work load may be augmented as follows: Sum of students X 60 to 250). The factor of 60 is used when students are taking classes; 200 is used when guiding master's level research and writing; 250 is used when guiding doctoral level research and writing.

Some teachers work very conscientiously. After lunch, they go to the classroom (or in the evening, to the students' dormitory) to answer questions, and students may go to their teacher's home to ask questions at any time, and often do as late as midnight. Calculation of such real work hours cannot be exact. But, the system described above tries to allow for it.

Some teachers do administrative or political work as an additional part of their work assignments; for example, Chairman of a department, Party Secretary of a department, Director of a teaching section; these positions usually equal 300-500 teaching hours. Persons in these positions may also teach classes and guide graduate students. Professor Yu Qun, Chairman of the Machine Design and Manufacturing Department at Beijing Agricultural Mechanization College, guides three master's students and teaches Terrain Vehicle Systems Mechanics. He also does research work and has published numerous papers. Usually, teachers of Basic Courses, i.e., English, Math, Physics and Mechanics have lectures two terms a year. But, some teachers of specialized courses, i.e., Machine Design, Soil Mechanics, etc. may have classes only one term a year.[24]

Teachers with no courses assigned during a particular term are expected to work eight hours a

day. Sometimes they attend other teachers' lectures in order to improve their teaching or research skills. Although this is particularly true of assistant teachers, it may also occur with lecturers, associate professors and professors.

Outside the Classroom

On the one hand, it seems that faculty members, especially those who teach specialized courses, have a light teaching load; on the other hand, all faculty members fact the common struggle to meet personal and family needs. Anyone who has seen the number of people on the streets during the day would recognize that not everyone who has a job is on duty at all times, and faculty members often find it necessary to do shopping, visit offices, or go to appointments that take large chunks of their day because of the inadequacies of communication and transportation systems.

In addition, faculty members with children spend considerable time guiding and helping them with schoolwork and preparing them for university. It is usually the father who helps with the homework while the mother cooks or does housework. However, more and more men are sharing equally in the family chores, which may include daily shopping and housecleaning not only for their own family, but for aged parents as well.

One of the added considerations in this area is school lunches. China's primary and secondary schools traditionally have not provided lunches for students or faculty. Since Beijing's city government has shortened lunch breaks for government workers to thirty minutes from the previous hour and a half, it is difficult for parents to prepare lunch for their children (or for themselves). Fast-foods have not become very widely available in China, despite the well-publicized 1986 opening of Kentucky Fried Chicken in Beijing. Some experimental steps are being taken to solve this problem.

In cooperation with local restaurants and neighborhood committees, the primary schools are now beginning to provide school lunches offered at "favorable" prices.[25] Eight restaurants in the East City District of Beijing now provide lunches at reduced prices, and the district's women's federation has organized neighborhood committees to heat up Chinese style ready-made lunches. The government is

also encouraging development of Chinese style fast-food processing plants that began producing in 1987, using Japanese technology.

Spare-time activities are considered important, too. Teachers often watch T.V., go to the movies, listen to music, or visit friends and relatives. They also enjoy ping pong, badminton or volleyball with their colleagues, students, friends and family. Some young teachers now even enjoy dance parties on weekends.

Salary and Benefits

Usually, the teacher's salary is determined by the number of years worked, while rank is decided on seniority plus research work, publications, etc. Sometimes teachers who have made outstanding contributions in their field, will be promoted in rank, but not necessarily receive a raise in salary. For example, Li Ming-rui, who graduated from Beijing University in the 1960s and is now an associate professor there, is internationally known for his work in finite element analysis; and Zhang Qing-an an associate professor at Beijing Agricultural Mechanization Institute, graduated in the 1950's and has made many important contributions to computer applications in the Agricultural Ministry. Both presently receive salaries in the lecturer range of the scale, though the central government has recently announced that people who have not had a raise in pay grade since the 1960s will soon be given raises.[26]

Table 2 shows the salary scale presently approved by the State Education Commission.[27] Generally, professors would have salaries in the top three steps (1-3); assistant professors would have salaries in the next three steps (4-6); lectures' salaries would be in the next three (7-9); and assistant teachers' would be in the last four (10-13). However, as mentioned above, many faculty members have lower salaries than they should in relation to their titles. This is another legacy of the "Cultural Revolution." During that period, no teachers received promotions or raises. Most felt fortunate to even be able to teach rather than mucking out cesspools or performing heavy labor in the countryside. After the change in national leadership, promotions began to reoccur, but salary raises have come somewhat

more slowly. And at the same time that many people who have not had raises since the 1960s, or earlier, will soon receive raises, the central government has also said all persons who reach the age of retirement must retire immediately, which includes many of those who would expect raises. This is all the more important because retirement benefits are a percentage of the last pay grade.

The cost of living increments relate to different areas of the nation as assessed by the government according to the local standard of living. In Table 2, the column headed 3 is for counties that are isolated from a city of any size, but which have enough resources not to need expensive transport of basic items. An example is Zigong in Sichuan Province. Area 4 also includes counties, plus small towns, and even some provincial capitals, e.g., Guiyang in Guizhou Province. Area 5 includes medium size cities, such as Changsha in Hunan Province and Chengdu in Sichuan Province. Area 6 includes large cities and developed areas like Beijing (central city area only). From here on it is more complicated, but area 7 includes places where the cost of living is higher, such as Fuzhou in Fujian Province. Area 8 includes Shanghai (central city area only). Area 9 includes Huixian in Gansu Province and Aihui in Heilongjiang Province. Area 10 includes such areas as Inner Mongolia in the far North of China. Area 11 includes such diverse areas as the provinces of Tibet and Xinjiang, and the city of Guangzhou (Canton) in Guangdong Province.

The salary scale was to be reformed in the second half of 1986, putting it in line with ranks and relating salary to responsibility and contributions.[28] Such a reform was to change the previous emphasis on longevity or quantitative, rather than qualitative measurements. It has, in fact, not met that expectation.[29]

Most teachers' income is limited to their salary, although they may receive a small amount in bonuses. And for a long time, teachers have been strictly confined to their own departments, whether or not they could be most effective there. Each semester the department would assign the teachers a certain number of courses, regardless of their specialities, or students' needs. Some teachers would have nothing to do for the whole semester if their courses were not offered, but they were not allowed to teach in other departments, let alone other schools.[30] There were no built-in incentives or penalties

to encourage teachers to work hard or improve their teaching. Good teachers didn't enjoy any better treatment and poor ones still went on lecturing in spite of student protests and complaints.

However, the government now encourages faculty members to do some outside work and earn extra money while using their abilities to greater advantage. Under this experimental system, faculty members are given contracts for one semester or one year by their own department or other departments. They contract to teach a certain number of courses and the departments pay them, apart from their regular salaries, bonuses or subsidies for extra work (overtime). In some schools, the system has been extended to department heads, deans and school managerial officials who are employed by the university president.[31] Their responsibilities, powers and salaries are all clearly stated in the contract.

Some universities are now even beginning to hire professors from other schools as part-time professors, advisors and laboratory technicians. A few have even been later appointed as permanent staff members in the new school. Some of these part-time faculty and staff have been able to solve technical problems, design machines, etc. for factories or farms, saving the organization large amounts of money.[32]

Anyone can accept invitations to lecture for special training classes, which are usually organized by colleges, factories or management organizations. For every class hour the organizer must pay 2-4 Yuan, depending upon the professional level of the instructor. However, the instructor does not necessarily get the entire amount paid. If the classes are taught during vacation or after the instructor has fulfilled the total teaching hours for the term, he or she may receive up to the full fee. If the term's teaching task is not yet completed, as little as 20% may be retained. In the case of a teacher who has finished his or her teaching task for the term, 50-80% usually may be retained. The balance is remitted to their parent institution.[33] So far, the new contract system has encouraged the teachers spiritually, but has not rewarded them monetarily as they receive little more than before.

Other than salary and benefits, differences are minor between ranks, but some of the differences are important enough to mention. Assigned housing may be more spacious for successively higher

ranks. But, housing is in very short supply throughout China, affecting teachers along with everyone else. By 1983, the average per capita floor space was only 4.6 square meters, one square meter greater than in 1978. About one third of urban households still suffer from overcrowding.[34]

For teachers, separate apartments are not usually assigned in the first three years of marriage or work at an institution.[35] Single teachers and married couples without children will usually live in a dormitory, the singles sharing a single room with two or three of their colleagues. There have been cases, personally known to the author, of a married couple having to share a 'three person room' with a single colleague. By the time a teacher has made associate or full professor, usually after twenty or more years, he or she will be assigned a four room apartment, including two bedrooms, living room, and kitchen. There will be a tiny bathroom as well.

When traveling on school business, associate professors are entitled to more comfortable train space, (i.e., 'soft sleeper' rather than 'hard') than is available to lecturers. In addition, they may spend more on hotel and meals.[36] In daily affairs, little difference exists between different ranks. All teachers are entitled to health care that is practically free. A standard fee for seeing the doctor is .05 Yuan, with treatment and medicine free. In work responsibilities, however, the status is quite different. A school dean or department chair usually must be an associate or full professor. The Chair of the Academic Council must be a full professor, as must the Chief Editor of a college or university journal.[37]

In teaching, research, and development, a professor's influence is important. Decisions affecting such areas as the setting up of a new department, curriculum, research project, etc. will weigh heavily the opinions of full professors. Likewise, which paper gets published, who receives a promotion, and final determination of who receives graduate degrees are affected by input from professors.

Evaluation and Promotion

The system for evaluating teachers begins with every section holding a meeting to evaluate its teachers each term, or at least each year. The teacher first evaluates him or herself, either orally or in writing. Then, colleagues and section leaders evaluate the teacher's work and comment on such

aspects as work attitude, effectiveness, political work, and how well he or she gets along with others. After this process is completed, the section elects 10% of its teachers as Model Teachers.

The process continues at Department level, with 10% of the teachers being recognized as Model Teachers and being recommended to the university or college for recognition. At school level, only one or two teachers will be awarded Model Teacher status. The recognition system goes through city level to province and even national level. At each level, teachers receive bonuses or prizes. But, recognition at school level or higher usually carries with it promotion and wider renown - invitations to give special lectures or classes, do more important research, etc.

The department has some decision-making power. It has the right to promote teachers, both in rank and salary (the latter is subject to approval by the institution), and to decide whether a teacher can study abroad. Usually, promotion is dependent upon a combination of the educational level and having at least three years in each level before being promoted. The institution, however, can exceed the common regulations and promote more than one rank at a time, e.g., Pan Cheng-biao of Beijing University was promoted from assistant teacher to associate professor in 1982.[38]

Since the end of the "Cultural Revolution," universities have done a lot to help and encourage middle-aged and young teachers to improve their educational level and skill. Every year, the schools choose some teachers to study in other universities in China or abroad. In 1984, the Beijing Agricultural Mechanization College sent more than 20 persons abroad for advanced study and sent 28 in 1985.[39]

Colleges and universities now encourage young teachers to take over research as well as to improve their teaching skills. Young teachers are given many chances to join research groups by assigning research tasks to them, and asking older professors and lecturers to guide them. The teacher may also ask for research work and attend lectures given by other teachers.

Conclusion

This report has taken only an introductory look at the current situation among postsecondary faculty in China. The present Chinese government recognizes that the nation must modernize. The

people are no longer satisfied with only "faya kaihua" (buds and blossoms), but increasingly demand to enjoy the fruits of their hardship and labor. Recent political upheavals in Beijing have indicated that political reform has not kept pace with economic reform, though economic reform has also been inconsistent. The seriousness of the effect of the political unrest is likely to place educational reform 'further back on the stove.' If hard-line leaders gain control, economic reform will slow. If moderate leaders gain control, there may still be 'more important' things to think about than the improvements in financial conditions of postsecondary faculty.

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Table 1

Full-time School System

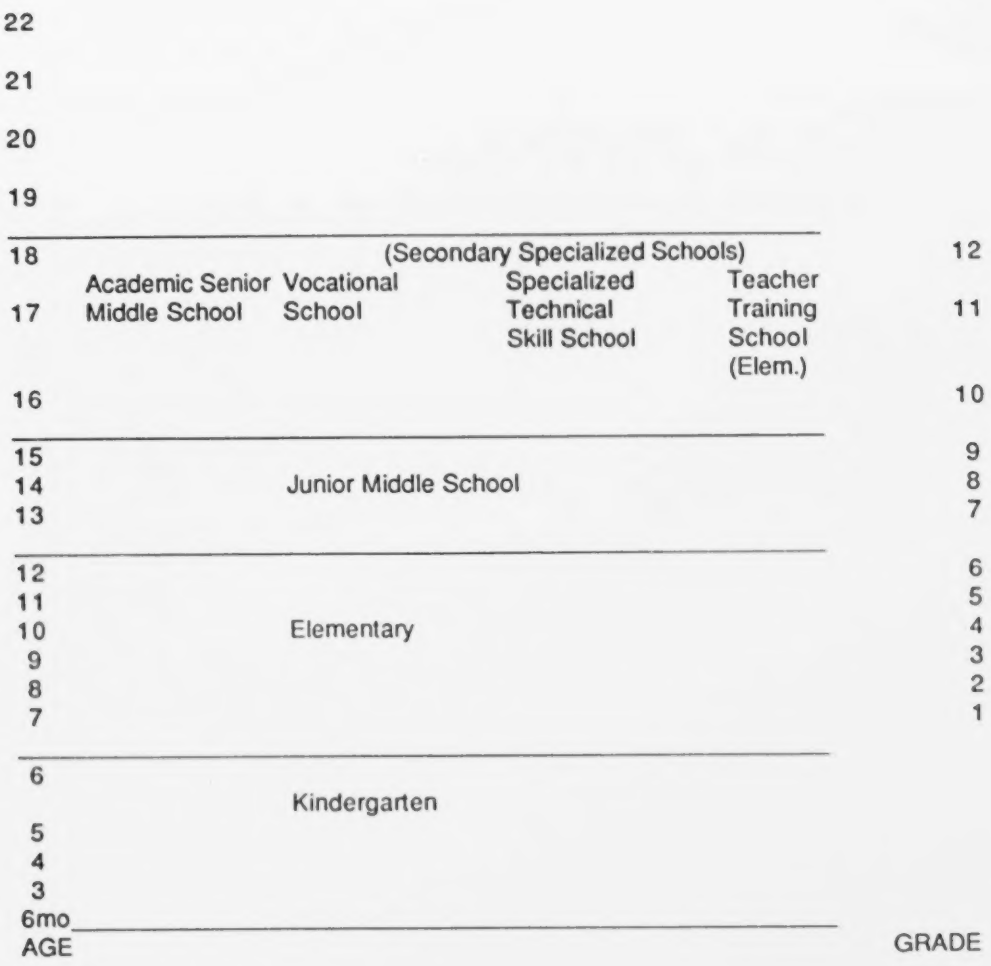

Table 2

Wage Scale for Postsecondary Teachers
State Educational Commission figures for 1985-86
(Source, State Education Commission)

	Cost of living increments (Yuan per month)								
	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Grade									
1	318.0	327.0	336.0	345.0	354.0	363.0	372.0	381.0	390.0
2	265.0	272.5	280.0	287.5	295.0	302.5	310.0	317.5	325.0
3	222.5	229.5	235.0	241.5	248.0	254.0	260.5	266.5	273.0
4	191.0	196.0	201.5	207.0	212.5	218.0	223.0	228.5	234.0
5	163.0	168.0	172.5	177.0	181.5	186.5	191.0	195.5	200.0
6	138.0	141.5	145.5	149.5	153.5	157.5	161.0	165.0	169.0
7	116.5	120.0	123.0	126.5	130.0	133.0	136.5	139.5	143.0
8	97.5	100.5	103.0	106.0	108.5	111.5	114.0	117.0	119.5
9	82.5	85.0	87.5	89.5	92.0	94.5	96.5	99.0	101.5
10	72.0	74.0	76.0	78.0	80.0	82.0	84.5	86.5	88.5
11	63.5	65.5	67.0	69.0	71.0	72.5	74.5	76.0	78.0
12	57.0	59.0	60.5	62.0	63.5	65.5	67.0	68.5	70.0
13	51.5	53.0	54.5	56.0	57.0	58.5	60.0	61.5	63.0

Footnotes

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